

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 01420 150127Z

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY ACHIEVES NATIONAL SCOPE

REFS: A. MONTERREY A-134 DEC. 10, 1974

B) GUADALAJARA A-3 JAN. 13, 1975

C) MONTERREY A-8 FEB. 11, 1975

SUMMARY: A LONG SIMMERING CONTROVERSY OVER GOM 6TH GRADE TEXTBOOKS FLARED UP HERE FOLLOWING PUBLIC ATTACKS BY NATIONAL PARENTS UNION. GOM REBUTTALS DEFENSIVE AND RATHER EXTREME IN DENOUNCING MOTIVATION OF TEXTBOOK CRITICS. NONETHELESS GOM MAY WELL ACCOMMODATE TEXTS TO SATISFACTION OF MIDDLE CLASSES WHICH HAVE SHOWN THEY DO NOT WANT THIRD WORLD RHETORIC BEING TAUGHT THEIR CHILDREN. POSSIBILITY EXISTS, HOWEVER, THAT FRONTAL ASSAULT OF CRITICS AND GOM DEFENSE, PLUS INVOLVEMENT OF OPPOSITION PARTY BY NATIONAL ACTION MAY MAKE SUCH COMPROMISE DIFFICULT. END SUMMARY.

1. REFERENCES ARE INFORMATIVE DISPATCHES TREATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTROVERSY OVER THE RECENT PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION BY THE GOM SECRETARIAT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION (SEP) OF TWO SIXTH GRADE TEXT BOOKS--ONE IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, THE OTHER IN SOCIAL SCIENCES. THIS TELEGRAM ATTEMPTS TO DESCRIBE
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PAGE 02 MEXICO 01420 150127Z

DEVELOPMENT OF CONTROVERSY INTO ONE INVOLVING NATIONAL FIGURES

AND ITS POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. IT IS NOT AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTS OR THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF MEXICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

2. TEXTS ARE BEING OPPOSED BY THREE GROUPS -- THE NATIONAL PARENTS UNION (PLUS ITS STATE ORGANIZATIONS), THE OPPOSITION PARTY OF NATIONAL ACTION (PAN), AND, MOST RECENTLY, THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS.

3. CONTROVERSY BEGAN IN LATE AUTUMN 1974, MOSTLY IN PROVINCIAL CITIES. ALTHOUGH IT RECEIVED ATTENTION AND COMMENT IN MEXICO CITY, IT DID NOT BECOME FULL-FLEDGED NATIONAL CONTROVERSY UNTIL NATIONAL PARENTS UNION (UNPF), PUBLISHED HARSHLY CRITICAL FULL-PAGE ADS FEBRUARY 3 AND 4 IN MOST MEXICO CITY DAILIES.

4. UNDF ADS ATTACKED BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES TEXT FOR ITS TREATMENT OF SEXUAL REPRODUCTION (NO MENTION OF CONJUGAL LOVE, SPIRITUAL VALUES), EVOLUTION (FOR DESCRIBING IT AS LAW INSTEAD OF ONE OF SEVERAL COMPETING THEORIES, OF WHICH DIVINE CREATION IS ONE), AND "RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD" (FOR LACK OF DETAIL AS TO HOW TEACHERS ARE TO GIVE INSTRUCTION ON THIS SUBJECT).

5. UNPF ATTACK ON SOCIAL SCIENCES TEXT IS MORE DETAILED-- IN ESSENCE CRITICISM IS THAT TEXT HAS HEAVY MARXIST BIAS.

6. RESPONSE TO UNPF ADS BY NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURES WAS SWIFT AND IN SOME INSTANCES EQUALLY HARSH. PRI (RULING PARTY) PRESIDENT REYES HERODES LABELED THE TEXTS "ANOTHER PRETEXT TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT" AND LATER PLACED THE CRITICISMS IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS THE DECEMBER 1974 "STERILIZATION RUMORS" (SEE MEXICO 10599), AND EVEN MORE EXTREME; "THE ENEMIES OF THE TEXTS PURSUE THE SAME ENDS AS THE TERRORISTS: DESTROY CONCORD, DISTORT SOCIETY AND FOMENT DISPUTES AMONG MEXICANS".

7. ON FEBRUARY 7, THE 87 BISHOPS OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE MEXICAN EPISCOPATE CONCLUDED ITS MEETING WITH A STATEMENT WHICH RECOGNIZED THE WORTH OF THE NEW TEXTS BUT DECLARED THAT THEY CONTAINED IDEOLOGIES "UNACCEPTABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE." THE BISHOPS URGED ALL INTERESTED GROUPS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MEXICO 01420 150127Z

TO PRESENT THEIR COMPLAINTS AND SUGGESTIONS TO THE NATIONAL TECHNICAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION, A SEP UNIT WHICH WROTE AND PUBLISHED THE TEXTS.

8. SECRETARY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION BRAVO AHUHA HAS SPOKEN PUBLICLY TWICE ON SUBJECT. ALTHOUGH HEADLINES AND REPORTING GENERALLY ACCENTUATED MORE COMBATIVE ASPECTS OF HIS REMARKS, POLITICAL COMMENTATORS WHO ATTENDED SEP PRESS CONFERENCE

(FEATURING BRAVO AND FOUR OTHER SPEAKERS) WROTE THAT CENTRAL THEME OF SEP PRESENTATION WAS WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN SUGGESTED CHANGES.

9. MEANWHILE FLAP CONTINUES WITH SOME DEFENDERS OF TEXT-BOOKS SPEAKING OBLIQUELY OF APPLYING ARTICLE 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION MORE STRICTLY (ARTICLE 3 GIVES STATE EXTENSIVE POWER TO CONTROL EDUCATION), A REFERENCE TO FACT THAT SCHOOLS OPERATED BY RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS TO DO AT SUFFERANCE OF GOM.

10. COMMENT: OPPOSITION PAN, WHICH HAS BEEN PUBLICLY ACTIVE THROUGHOUT CONTROVERSY, THOUGH NEVER IN FOREFRONT, PROBABLY HAS REASON TO BE HAPPY WITH PROGRESS OF CONTROVERSY, AS MIDDLE CLASS DISENCHANTMENT WITH BOOKS WILL REGISTER IN NEXT FEDERAL ELECTIONS.

11. REFS A-C DESCRIBE SUFFICIENT AMOUNT OF TEXTS FOR ONE TO CONCLUDE THERE'S SOME VALIDITY TO CRITICISMS--PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS THE SOCIAL SCIENCES TEXTBOOK.

12. REF C MAKES INTERESTING POINT THAT, IN MONTERREY AT LEAST, MIDDLE CLASSES MORE CONCERNED WITH SOCIAL SCIENCES TEXT WHILE LOWER CLASSES PREOCCUPIED WITH BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE TEXTBOOK TREATMENT OF SEXUAL REPRODUCTION.

13. MESSAGE GOM APPEARS TO BE GETTING FROM THE CONTROVERSY--PARTICULARLY REGARDING SOCIAL SCIENCES TEXT--IS THAT A NORMALLY "SILENT MAJORITY" HAS PASSIVELY TOLERATED A GREAT DEAL OF THIRD WORLD RHETORIC FOR OVER FOUR YEARS BUT WILL NOT PUT UP WITH IT BEING TAUGHT THEIR CHILDREN.

14. ALTHOUGH GOM CLEARLY HAS CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY TO REQUIRE USE OF THE TEXTBOOKS, WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 MEXICO 01420 150127Z

LEARN THAT TEXTS UNDERGO SOME REVISION. POSSIBILITY EXISTS, HOWEVER, THAT FRONTAL ASSAULT OF CRITICS AND INVOLVEMENT OF PAN WILL MAKE ACCOMMODATION DIFFICULT.
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